



EPA to Investigate Former Lake Erie Smelting Corporation Buffalo, Erie County, New York

Community Update

September 2015

September 15-16, 2015

From 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, EPA representatives will be at the Apartment Office and available to answer your questions and address your concerns regarding the sampling event.

If you have any questions or would like additional information regarding the Site, please contact one of the following:

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SITE BACKGROUND

The Lake Erie Smelting Corporation was formerly located at 29 Superior Street, Buffalo, Erie County, New York. However, Superior Street no longer exists. The footprint of the former facility currently lies north of Clinton Street and west of Jefferson Street in what is currently the Towne Gardens apartment complex. The address of the Towne Gardens apartment complex is identified as 161 Hickory Street. Two of the apartment buildings now sit on top of the former smelter location.

Lake Erie Smelting Corporation was a secondary smelter that recovered lead from scrap. Smelting operations were conducted from the mid-1930s through the late-1950s. By the mid-1960s all buildings and structures were removed and construction of the apartment complex started in 1972. The Towne Gardens apartment complex consists of approximately 360 units and is surrounded by parking areas, sidewalks and grass-covered lawns.

ASSESSMENT

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will be conducting an environmental assessment of the Towne Gardens apartment complex during the month of September 2015. Soil samples will be collected to determine if previous smelting activities have impacted the residential complex. Surface and subsurface soil samples will be tested for heavy metals, including lead, the primary concern with former smelting activities.

EPA will be collecting samples from grass-covered areas throughout the complex. Precautions will be taken to ensure that the public and the environment are protected during sampling activities. Results will be available approximately three months after collection. At that time, EPA will provide information to the public regarding the results and any additional sampling activities that may be necessary.

General Questions and Answers

<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>
What is lead?	Lead is a naturally occurring element found in all parts of our environment. Lead and lead compounds are used in a variety of products including paint, ceramics, pipes and plumbing materials, gasoline, batteries, ammunition, and cosmetics. While it has many beneficial uses, exposure to large concentrations can be harmful to humans and animals.
What is secondary lead smelting?	Secondary smelting plants refine scrap or used lead material into metallic lead of a higher purity, which allows for reuse. Lake Erie Smelting Corp. was a secondary lead smelter that used products such as batteries, lead cable coverings, plumbing materials and wheel weights, and extracted the lead. Secondary smelting can be responsible for releasing lead into the environment through lead fume emissions. Lead dust and smoke can be released during the smelting process, and lead contaminated slag may be left over.
What areas of the Towne Gardens apartment complex being sampled?	EPA and contractor personnel will be sampling in various locations throughout the Towne Gardens apartment complex. Focus will be placed on the grass-covered areas within the complex. Soil samples will be collected from approximately 52 independent locations. At each location, 5 samples will be collected from various depths starting at surface and continuing to 2 feet. Scoops and augers will be used to collect material prior to placing them in jars. Samples will then be sent to a laboratory for analysis of heavy metals, including lead.
What are the primary concerns of lead?	Lead becomes harmful to humans when it enters the body through ingestion (eaten) or inhalation (breathing in lead containing particles or dust). Although the effects of lead exposure are a potential concern to all humans, young children are most at risk. In adults, exposure to lead may cause poor muscle coordination, nerve damage, and reproductive problems amongst others. However, exposure of lead to children may cause development impairments, neurological deficiencies and behavioral problems.
What can I do to protect myself and my family?	It is currently unknown if soil at the Towne Gardens apartment complex is contaminated with lead. Samples will allow EPA to determine if lead is present at levels that may be a health concern for residents. Prior to receipt of sample results, some residents may wish to take precautionary actions to protect themselves and their family. The best course of action is to practice good hygiene after coming in contact with dirt and soil. Hand washing with warm soap and water is one of the best ways to prevent exposure from soil contamination. In addition, brushing off loose soil from clothing and shoes will aid in limiting contact or tracking soil inside the home. Watching over small children to make sure they do not eat dirt or soil will also limit ingestion of material.